

**Testimony before the Appropriations Committee  
February 16, 2017**

**Department of Rehabilitation Services budget cuts and changes**

Governor's H.B. 7027 AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE  
BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE THIRTIETH 2019, AND MAKING APPROPRIATIONS  
THEREFORE

Good afternoon Senators Osten and Formica, Representative Walker and members of the Appropriations Committee.

My name is Diane Barber and I am a registered voter in Stratford, CT.

While I cannot physically be there, I hope this letter serves as testimony enough as to the trepidations I have regarding any cuts the state budget. I am writing to share my grave concerns about the proposed budget for the governmental departments that provide funding to Access Independence (AI), Stratford, CT; and the agencies its required to share funding with, which includes the four other independent living centers in the State of CT.

The current loss of funding to AI has resulted in, and will continue to result in a loss of qualified staff assisting people with a variety of disabilities. When underserved populations are empowered with services to help themselves, it creates a better sense of self-reliance and a greater contribution to one's community. The loss has greatly reduced the agency's catchment area from the Stratford area to Greenwich, down to a few towns that surround Stratford. This current deficit, if left alone or increases, will in the long term create high cost services, that will leave many people stranded. If people cannot get needed services, there is a rippling effect of losing housing, creation of food insecurities, the ability to go out to work, and educational or vocational services reduced or eliminated.

While I personally do not have someone in my family with a need for independent living services, I serve on the AI board, and I share the concern that all citizens have the right to self-respect and should have an opportunity have the support to work and function in their community. I retired from the State of CT as a Chief Probation Officer I, and one of the challenges we faced,

was having available services to help support people to successfully complete their probation.

To reiterate, reinstating budget cuts would greatly aid AI in providing adequate services from Stratford to Greenwich. Additional cuts in funding would only have a detrimental rippling effect on the southwest area of CT. Thank you for this opportunity to address you with my concerns.

Respectfully submitted,

Diane Barber